
PLACE: Baghdad, Iraq

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More land needed to house thousands of newly displaced Iraqi families – UNHCR

Thousands more people continue to flee their homes as a military offensive to retake the eastern bank of the Tigris from extremist groups continues. The influx started in late March and new arrivals are overcrowding shelter facilities for newly displaced families in Debaga, Makhmur district, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I).

Around 17,700 people are now staying at various camp facilities in Debaga, including recently-opened UNHCR shelters at a football stadium, as well as the local school and mosque in Debaga camp, which already hosted 3,500 displaced people prior to the latest military offensive. Since July 1, more than 5,100 people have arrived in Debaga, most from Haji Ali and Hawiga.

It is estimated that as many as ten thousand more people could arrive in the next few days and weeks as families flee villages in the Al Qayyarah Valley in Hamdaniya district (Ninewa Governorate) where military operations are ongoing.

As a result of the military offensive, more than 20,000 people have been displaced from their homes in and around Makhmur district since late March. More than 6,700 people have left Debaga through sponsorship, but the number of new arrivals is outpacing the number of departures.

The UN refugee agency, UNHCR, is preparing to build another site to house the families in Debaga, but is warning that even this new facility, which could accommodate around 6,000 people, will not be able to keep pace with the flow and speed of new arrivals.

“It’s a race against time to provide enough emergency shelters to assist families who’ve fled for their lives”, said UNHCR’s Representative in Iraq, Bruno Geddo. “We believe as many as 10,000 more people might soon arrive and we are desperate to find new areas where we can establish camps that can house them.

“We are urging the authorities to free up more land that we can use to build new facilities to house the families. Already-existing shelters are now hugely overcrowded. We are working hard, with our partners, to build new camps, but without more land, we cannot provide enough shelters to meet all the needs.”

On Tuesday, UNHCR and the Barzani Charity Foundation distributed more than five hundred emergency relief kits to newly arrived families.



PRESS RELEASE

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